

You may be represented through your word today, through our prayers today, through our song today, Lord. It is you. You alone are worthy. In Jesus' name we ask that you would bless our time together and bring you a power and truth into our lives in a mighty way. In Jesus' name, Amen. The first reading is one that should be very familiar to you if you are in the Word. It is from, well, it's in the Gospels in general. I'm reading from Luke chapter 4 verse 13. And this is known as the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness or in the desert. Then Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness where he was tempted by the devil for 40 days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry. Then the devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become a loaf of bread." But Jesus told him, "No, the Scriptures say people do not live by bread alone." Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. "I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them," the devil said, "because they are mine to give to anyone I please. I will give it all to you if you will worship me." Jesus replied, "The Scriptures say you must worship the Lord your God and serve him only." Then the devil took him to Jerusalem to the highest point of the temple and said, "If you are the Son of God, jump off, for the Scriptures say he will order his angels to protect and guard you, and they will hold you up with their hands so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone." Jesus responded, "The Scriptures also say you must not test the Lord your God." When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came. I am going to read to you two stories now and at the end of them I am going to ask you to think back on the trials of Jesus in the desert and answer me the question, "What is the big difference in the behavior of Jesus and how he handles these situations?" The first story is again from Luke chapter 4 beginning with verse 31. Then Jesus went to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught there in the synagogue every Sabbath day. There too the people were amazed at his teaching, for he spoke with authority. Once when he was in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit, cried out shouting, "Go away! Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus reprimanded him, "Be quiet! Come out of the man!" he ordered. At that the demon threw the man on the floor as the crowd watched. Then it came out of him without hurting him further. Amazed, the people exclaimed, "What authority and power this man's words possess! Even evil spirits obey him and they flee at his command." The news about Jesus spread through every village in the entire region. The next section that I am going to read is really for the last paragraph. After leaving the synagogue that day, Jesus went to Simon's home where he found Simon's mother-in-law very sick with a high fever. "Please heal her," everyone begged. Standing at her bedside, he rebuked the fever and it left her. She got up at once and prepared a meal for them. We talked about that word "rebuked" last week. As the sun went down that evening, people throughout the village brought sick family members to Jesus. No matter what their diseases were, the touch of his hand healed everyone. Many were possessed by demons. The demon came out at his command, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But because they knew he was the Messiah, he rebuked them and refused to let them speak. Keep that in mind. Jesus is dealing with demons all over. The Prince of Demons he deals with first, and now he is dealing with demons in the possession of human bodies. He treats things differently in both cases. One more story to listen to in how Jesus handles demonic possession in human bodies. When they returned to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd surrounding them and some teachers of religious law were arguing with them. When the crowd saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with all and they ran to greet him. "What is all this arguing about?" Jesus asked. One of the men in the crowd spoke up and said, "Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him. He is possessed by an evil spirit that won't let him talk. And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at his mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I ask you, your disciples, to cast out the evil spirit." But they couldn't do it. Jesus said to them, "You faithless people, how long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." So they brought the boy, but when the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the child into a violent convulsion. He fell to the ground, writhing and foaming at the

mouth. "How long has this been happening?" Jesus asked the boy's father. He replied, "Since he was a little boy." The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water trying to kill him. "Have mercy on us and help us if you can." "What do you mean, 'if I can'?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes." The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief." When Jesus saw that the crowd of onlookers was growing, he rebuked the evil spirit. "Listen, you spirit that makes this boy unable to hear and speak," he said. "I command you to come out of this child and never enter him again." Then the spirit screamed, threw the boy into another violent convulsion and lashed him. The boy appeared to be dead. A murmur ran through the crowd as the people said, "He's dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him to his feet and he stood up. Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, "Why couldn't we cast out that evil spirit?" Jesus replied, "This kind can only be cast out by prayer." So we see Jesus dealing with the prince of demons, the satan, the imposter of God's will. We see Jesus dealing with demonic spirits in possession of human bodies. The final word, well, we probably don't have that because I usually just read it. The final word is the story of the demons and the pigs, the legion. It's the same scenario. I'll say a little bit about this and then maybe you can compare the two and what's going on here. This is Luke 8, beginning with verse 26. It's, again, another familiar passage of scripture. They arrived in the region of Gerasenes across the lake from Galilee. As Jesus was climbing out of the boat, a man who was possessed by demons came out to meet him. For a long time he had been homeless and naked, living in the tombs outside of the town. As soon as he saw Jesus, he shrieked, fell down in front of him. Then he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, son of the most high God? Please, I beg you, don't torture me, for Jesus had already commanded the evil spirit to come out of him." Let's stop there. Anybody see the big difference in the way Jesus handled the prince of demons and the demonic spirits who are possessing the image bearers of God? There's a big difference there. How did he handle, what did he use, what weapon of the armor of God did he use to deal with Satan himself? The word of the scripture. The original word. Scripture. The word of God, the scripture say, what did he use to deal with the demonic possession of those image bearers? Prayer and speaking. The difference is he teaches us or he shows us, he demonstrates to us for our sake and our purposes the power of the written word of God. The scriptures say, and after the first two interactions, Satan, he's not dumb, he catches on, he says, "Scriptures say," and this is where we learn to do what we do. What's our first rule of theology? Scripture informs scripture. Jesus comes right back and says, "The scriptures also say," and so we're doing this and he's showing us at the very beginning of his ministry, these events in the second meetings were farther along in his ministry. But he's showing us, and there's so much as with many of these stories and parables and things that we're talking about, there are so many preachable points. But what we want to hone in on today is the power of the written word. Jesus says, "The scriptures say," he is the word incarnate. We know that. We know that he is God and we know that he is sovereign. We see that when he confronts demonic spirits that are possessing these other image bearers of God. But much along the lines of the argument that says, "If Jesus is God, why does he need to pray? Is he just praying to himself?" Well, part of the response to that is, "No, he tells us that he is the way." It's not only the way, right? The way of salvation. He is the way, the way of behavior, the way of how we should behave toward a holy God. And so he prays in submission. He shows us submission. That's why we wash feet. He shows us the fact that he is human. That's why we wash feet as well. Not just that, but you understand what I'm saying. So he shows us this submission. He shows us this behavior by praying to God. He even teaches us, when you do pray, pray this way. And he gives us this model prayer that we can hang a lot of meat on or just repeat it throughout the course of the day ourselves. In John 17, he gives us the Lord's Prayer as he prays for himself, his disciples, and all of humanity. Well, much the same way that he is demonstrating the way, he's demonstrating for us the power of Scripture. He knows that moving forward, this ark-canon is not complete in Jesus' time. We have yet to add this New Testament. But he's showing us the power of the written word. You know why? Because he is the last prophet. And when he ascends, what we will have as his church is the written word. And that excludes all of the

charlatans who claim to be hearing from God directly and being these prophets and all of this other stuff. It excludes that because our canon is the word of God. If you want to hear somebody prophesy today, which means speaking the word of God, then you should say, "So sayeth the Lord that open your Bible and read it." There's the word of God. That's what we have. And so he shows Satan the power of the written word. And in so doing, he shows us the power of the written word. And that is not to be taken lightly in any way, shape or form. Paul goes back to talking about resisting the devil and he will flee from you. Jesus talks about being in the word. Paul, John, Peter talk about being in the word, being immersed in the word of God, knowing the word of God. The church today must be saturated in the word of God. And it's one of the areas where we drifted from. But here at church, and you all know, the past three years, we've been like, we're all about what we call biblical literacy. I want you to be able to have well-balanced, intelligent, good conversations about your Christian faith with all of the idiocy and all of the gotcha questions and all of the, you are haters of this and haters of that and God's love this and that. You must be able to respond thoughtfully and richly, speak in the word of God. Not get into these Jerry Springer shows of theological argument. You've heard my model, I've modeled it to you many times, even if somebody gives me a gotcha question, so I'm gay, so you must hate me. Well, if you would really like to know my views, first of all, I don't hate you. Secondly, if you really want to know my views on human sexuality, I'd love to have that conversation with you from my point of view, what I know. If you want to fight, and I don't want to fight with you, I'm not throwing my pearls to the swine, I wouldn't say that to the person, but you can make that discernment. And you should be able, if they say, I am going to hear what you have to say, what is the Christian point of view, you should be able then to have that conversation. And that should entail more than a couple of proof texts from Leviticus or Romans. It should entail what the depth and the breadth of scripture has to say about men, women and healthy human sexuality. And now the ball's in their court, they've heard it. There is objective truth regarding this issue. And that's where the church must be instead of going knuckle for knuckle, meme for meme on social media and all that other craziness. So Jesus models this 2000 years ago, the scriptures say, and that's where we need to be as a church, we need to be able to say the scriptures teach us this, that and the other thing. So now we move forward into what we've been talking about here, and that is the absolute sovereignty of the Christ. He alone is worthy of our worship. And there is a definite point that I want to make here, too, because it is in contrast to a growing movement within Christianity. And that is the idea that you have a church service in order to cast out demons from within the Christian body. Nowhere in scripture are we taught that that is a thing. These deliverance preachers are charlatans. Nowhere are we taught that God, that God's Holy Spirit dwells alongside a demon in your heart. In fact, scripture teaches us the exact opposite to be true. It talks about the strong man and the home. We know from reading scripture, again the depth and the breadth of it, that good and evil cannot exist at the same place at the same time. It's good or it's evil. There isn't any gray area, no matter how much you might want to think there should be some gray area, because you would rather not have that, you know, that full truth as a part of your life, or you would rather not see that exclusive, or you would rather not. Okay, fine. You would rather not. That's a you problem, not a scripture problem. So here is Jesus with the obviously God, the power of God. And now we see again the word of God in another way. He is the word incarnate. He is the power of God. He is the creative force of God. And he is sovereign. Last week we saw over the physical. Rebuke the storm and it stops and the seas calm. He controls the laws of physics because he created the laws of physics and he can bend them at his will. Now we understand a couple of things from these passages. First of all, something that Satan would very much like you not to understand, and that there is a spiritual realm. There are spiritual created beings. We've heard of them, Terabims, Erephim, angels, demons. They are a part of creation, but they are created. And Jesus is sovereign over all of them. He is sovereign over all of creation. He demonstrates this by again invoking the word of God, but this time it is himself. And he says, "Demon, get out." And the demons quickly obey. They don't have a choice. They scream and they yell, "I'm happy here. I love destroying this person. I'm happy in this home." And the one says, "Have you come to torture me?" Because he knows that time is

coming, right? When they will be cast into the lake of fire, there will be no relief. The time is not now. He just says, "No, I'm demonstrating for the purposes of these people here, and for the purpose of the person who is demonically possessed," because he certainly wants to help that individual, "and for the sake of the church for millennia to come, that I am sovereign over the physical realm, and I am sovereign over the spiritual realm." And isn't it odd that throughout the Gospels, human being after human being after human being question who Jesus is? He performs miracle after miracle after miracle. He feeds thousands of people with a couple of fish. He does all of these things and people are still like, "Who are you? Tell us who you are." When he walks up to a demon-possessed person and the demon says, "Why are you here to torture me, O son of the Most High God?" Because that's us. If you just perform one more miracle, then we will believe. If you show us the Father, then I promise we will believe. When the demons are like, "Ahh! It's God! Why are you here?" I'm here, as I've mentioned to you, one, to help this individual, two, to show all of these people who I am, and three, to show the church for all of posterity who I am. Bring along another individual, not only these charlatans today who do these deliverance services, and all of this emotionality, and all of this flopping around and screaming and babbling and crying and stuff. Don't give me that. Bring me a person who will walk in front of a demon and that demon will recognize them as God. And as I said last week, I'll retire because He alone is not worthy. I can put on all of the charades that I want to, and we can turn this place into some sort of, you know, booming lights and dark and everybody's getting all worked up and we're about to bring demons out. You can't bring demons out of Christians who are possessed by God's Holy Spirit. It doesn't work that way. Is demonic possession a thing? Yes, but not in a follower of Christ. Not in a follower of Christ. This is actually the one area, and I think Catholicism has gotten a bit away from it, but there's like a whole department of Catholicism. They understand demonic possession. There are priests that are brought up specifically for exorcisms. Now it's been, you know, hyperbolized and it's been dramatized by Hollywood and all of those things, but they actually understood this from the beginning. As a matter of fact, this is a true story. Now I'm going to lighten the mood a little bit. I'm mowing my grass at our old house and I get a phone call. Some of my best ministry happens when I'm mowing grass. And I kid you not, and God bless the person, I don't know where they all were mentally or whatever, but do you believe in demonic possession? I said, "I do believe in demonic possession." And the person said that the appliances of their home were demonically possessed. Would you be willing to come over and exorcise the demon Stromboe? And I quickly got on my smartphone and I looked up St. Patrick's number. I said, "Give them a call. They have individuals who are specifically trained to do such things." Now, that may be a lighthearted story. I don't believe that their appliances, do I believe that the person may have thought that? I don't know. But I pointed them toward the Catholic Church. I don't know how they appreciated that or not. I never got a phone call back from St. Pat's. But we see the two elements at work here and we need to not be vague on the power of God. We possess the very power that raised Christ from the dead within us. There is no doubt about that. And the gift that we are given, the tool that we are given, the weapon against evil that we are given, we are given is what? Scripture. We have the Word of God. We know the Word of God. We must continue to dig deeply and absorb the Word of God. We must eat these words and let them become a part of our being, which is demonstrated many times throughout Scripture as well. Sometimes literally when Ezekiel eats a scroll, John eats a scroll. And then we are also given the example of Jesus to know that he is the authority of all of this. He is the authority behind Scripture. Because when he walks among demons, they cry out because they know that God is in their presence. And they know that that is not a good thing because God is sovereign and they are not. And one word from God, from Jesus, out and they obey. So there is your two points that I'm bringing up today. The first one is we, as Jesus demonstrated in the desert with the prince of demons, have the exact same weapon that he wielded against Satan. We have. He showed us that we have. And he took it to the next level when Satan says, "Scripture says..." And then Jesus comes back and says, "But it also says that teaches us that we must know more than just some five-proof texts on any subject." We must know biblical theology. You already know a whole lot of biblical theology. I guarantee it.

What's that Cajun guy? Guarantee. I don't know where that came from. But you don't need all the fancy words attached to it. But you know when I hear it from you because you teach me whenever I have questions, whenever I am doubting, whenever I come to you for prayer, you teach me all these things from scripture. You guys know an awful lot of biblical theology. And that is what it's all about when we gather here today to go deeply into scripture, to learn, to grow, to become. So that we are not the Christians on social media having idiotic discussions and arguments. So that when we are approached outside of the church setting and somebody wants to actually have a conversation, we can. So that when we are approached by somebody who simply wants to get you with a "gotcha" question, we can let them know, "I understand why you would possibly feel this way or think this, but if you really want to know what scripture has to say, what Christianity's point of view is on this subject, I would love to have that conversation with you." He teaches us that we wield the same weapon that he did when he faced the devil face to face. And as we move forward, he teaches us once again that he alone is worthy of our worship. Because regardless of what displays human beings may want to put on in this regard, there has only ever been one human being who happened to also be God, one human being to walk the face of the planet that was sovereign over demons. Bring me another person and we'll go and find non-believers who are possessed by demons. And when they recognize that person as God and they bow down before him because they know that he is sovereign, I will retire because Jesus alone is not worthy. It won't happen. And that's where he's teaching us in our second part of the book. So take that to heart, my brothers and my sisters. Jesus alone is sovereign over all things created, physical and spiritual. Do not let other human beings fool you into believing that somehow they can wield the same power as Jesus did and does. Yet, and by that I mean having church services to extract the demonic from the Christian followers. That's not a thing. That's not a thing. And also take heart, my brothers and sisters, because not only do you have the very power that raised Christ from the dead within you, you have all of the holy scriptures that God ever intended you to have. And you wield that same weapon against evil that Jesus Christ did. Whether you are meaning an individual who is simply anti-Christ, demonically possessed or the devil himself, you have the same weapon that Christ did. His power, his spiritual power and his word. Amen.